

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBUL #0440/01 0400517
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 090517Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6011
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3635
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS KABUL 000440

SIPDIS
CORRECTED COPY CAPTION ADDED
SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

SCA/FO FOR DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A FOR MEGHAN BRADLEY, S/CRS,
PM/WRA FOR DENNIS HADRICK, CENTCOM FOR CSTC-A, CG CJTF-76,
POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MASS](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN MINE ACTION IN AFGHANISTAN - GOING
COMMERCIAL

¶1. (U) Contains Action Request; please see para 10.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: Afghanistan remains seriously affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) that cause nearly 100 casualties each month. Landmines and UXO are found in 2,368 communities as well as agricultural fields and around major cities. Afghanistan's Mine Action Program (MAPA) is one of the largest and oldest in the world. USG Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) focuses on protecting victims of conflict, restoring access to land and infrastructure and developing host nation capacity. U.S. direct funding provided to five Afghan NGOs gives them the flexibility to purchase supplies and equipment cutting down time and increasing productivity. PM/WRA manages a contract which uses DynCorp International to provide technical advisors to all five of the local NGOs. The State Department also funds The Halo Trust, a UK based NGO that has worked in Afghanistan since July 1988 for demining operations and for weapons and ammunition disposal. MAPA currently faces major budget shortfalls in its 2007-2008 budget, due to a drop off in international donations. UNMACA expects to have to lay off over 1,000 Afghan deminers currently employed in demining-related activities. END SUMMARY.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF AFGHAN DEMINING NGOS: LANDMINES TO DOLLARS

¶2. (U) USG funding for demining is likely to decrease in future years. The Afghan NGOs understand this and are preparing for this through the creation of commercial demining entities. The five U.S. funded Afghan NGOs have already begun the process by forming Afghan Demining Group (ADG), a commercial demining umbrella organization comprised of the five Afghan demining NGOs. While all of them conduct humanitarian demining, each one has a niche. For example, the Mine Detection Dog Center (MDC) trains most of the demining dogs in Afghanistan. MDC also has a commercial contract with the Afghan National Police to provide security dogs for K9 units. ADG will allow the NGOs to combine their talents and work together to compete for humanitarian demining contracts from international donors as well as other commercial

entities engaged in reconstruction activities requiring demining support. Their expertise and access throughout the country will be a valuable contribution that will also develop Afghan domestic capacity.

¶3. (U) Kefayatullah Eblagh, the director of one of the NGOs (the Afghan Technical Consultants - ATC), formed the first private Afghan demining organization, Hemayat Brothers Demining International (HID). In a January 22 meeting with Polmiloff, Kefayatullah reported that HID had acquired both a business license and UN accreditation to begin commercial work. He noted that although current Afghan law prevents ATC from engaging in commercial works, he was legally able to create HID as a separate entity without any difficulty from the GoA.

¶4. (U) According to Kefayatullah, HID allows him to hire ATC deminers that were laid off due to budget shortfalls. He noted HID has completed six demining projects throughout the country. Kefayatullah declined to say how much revenue HID generated from these projects, but mentioned HID recently won a \$450,000 contract from a U.S. company working on a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers demining project in Herat. Kefayatullah also mentioned HID will submit bids for demining work in Kandahar and other southern provinces.

¶5. (U) Addressing ADG, Kefayatullah said the five directors will meet to discuss how best to organize the company as well as decide upon a managing director. (Note: This level of cooperation among the Afghan NGOs is unprecedented. Even though the directors often refer to each others' NGOs as being part of "the family" and are extremely collegial, the NGOs currently are not engaged in joint operations. End Note) HALO TRUST

¶6. (SBU) The HALO Trust is a British, U.S., and Afghan NGO with approximately 6,900 locally trained staff working throughout Afghanistan. HALO's programs are primarily focused in the northern provinces, clearing the UXO and landmines from former Taliban-Northern Alliance frontlines. At the request of the GoA and the United Nations Mine Action Center for Afghanistan (UNMACA), HALO is also actively clearing ammunition caches throughout the country with weapons ammunition disposal (WAD) teams. These teams store much of the ammunition they uncover and are able indirectly to supply serviceable ammunition to the MoD through the UN. (Note: HALO Trust has concerns about supplying the MoD with ammunition because of their status as an NGO. However, the United Nations Development Program has agreed to deliver serviceable ammunition to the MoD. Post will further address this situation septel. End Note.)

UNMACA TO SUFFER BUDGET SHORTFALLS IN 2007

¶7. (U) Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) in Afghanistan is unique because the United Nations regulates HMA in country. UNMACA is currently responsible for the oversight and coordination of mine action activities on behalf of the GoA. UNMACA coordinates nationwide activities through seven regional mine action centers in Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz, Gardez and Jalalabad. These regional offices work directly with UN offices, government representatives and development organizations in each province. UNMACA also is responsible for certifying all demining organizations operating in country. All demining organizations must have UNMACA accreditation in order to conduct HMA in Afghanistan.

¶8. (U) UNMACA External Affairs Chief Liza De Benedetti told Polmiloff January 27 that the budget for the Mine Action Plan Afghanistan (MAPA), for 2007-2008 is short USD 61.4 million needed to sustain operations at the 2006 level, The top donors contributing to MAPA via UNMACA or directly include the European Commission, the United States, Canada, Germany, and Norway. Additionally, the GoA provides funding for MAPA activities through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), which is managed by the World Bank. According to De Benedetti, UNMACA asked the MFA (the lead GoA

ministry on demining) to request USD 25 million from the ARTF for the 2007-2008 MAPA budget. (Note: Polmiloff met with two Ministry of Finance officers February 6 who said the GoA does not plan to request these funds from the World Bank. End Note.) De Benedetti, said UNMACA hopes to diversify its donors by seeking grants from private charitable foundations. However, given the budget deficit, UNMACA expects to fire over 1,000 Afghan deminers in March 2007. According to UNMACA, one demining team (approximately 50 personnel per team including salaries, food, shelter, and equipment) costs USD 240,000 per year. (Note: Some experts involved in demining activities fear that these layoffs could be detrimental for the security environment, if some disgruntled deminers turn to the Taliban or other insurgents for money. Another possible result of the layoffs, might be an increase in mine-related injuries, particularly in rural areas where untrained Afghans might attempt to clear affected areas. End Note)

¶9. (U) According to De Benedetti, UNAMA officially supports the commercialization of the Afghan NGOs. She remarked the UNMACA's senior leadership agreed with the U.S. position that commercialization is a positive way for the Afghan demining NGOs to develop their own indigenous capacity to compete for commercial demining contracts. De Benedetti also reported that UNMACA has accredited ADG to compete for commercial demining contracts from the UN.

ACTION REQUEST

¶10. (U) Post seeks Department's assistance in urging international donors to redouble their efforts to help reduce MAPA's 2007-2008 budget shortfall. Maintaining adequate funding for HMA is very important for achieving our reconstruction and security goals, and for ensuring an effective transition to GOA-led HMA.

NEUMANN